

HARLEM FRIENDSHIP HOUSE NEWS

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Without Interracial Justice

Social Justice Will Fail

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EX-STAFF REPORTER AT LARGE

by Mary Jerdo Keating

"I SURE hate to see you leave the neighborhood, namesake." It was Miss Mary speaking. She was sitting on the front stoop of the tenement on 135th St. where we lived. And she always called me "namesake" because we were both known as "Miss Mary."

"I hate to go, too," I said sadly, "but I've been here a long time. More than two years. But, I'll be back in the fall."

Miss Mary squeezed my hand. "I certainly hope you will be, child," she said.

I said goodbye to her and left her sitting on the stoop in the bright June sunshine. I walked up 135th Street feeling as unhappy as any mortal could feel. I hated to say goodbye to Miss Mary, Friendship House, the "B" and that curious, exciting life in Harlem. I knew, too, that I probably wouldn't come back in the fall. I was leaving . . . not because Friendship House had failed or I had failed Friendship House. I was leaving simply because it was obvious that I had no vocation to the work. My apprenticeship was finished.

As I walked up the street I thought of the two years that had passed. I had come to Friendship House much against my will. And when I came I was a curious compound of pseudo-sophistication, phoney philosophies and smart repartee, probably my only saving grace was that, deep inside of me, I wanted terribly some spiritual reason for living. Friendship House had stripped me of all the worldly attributes of a personality girl and I was leaving with a foundation of solid Catholic dogmas and designs for living that make one look like a crackpot at large . . . in a materialistic world. It had taken me a long time to get that design for living though, I thought rather sadly. When I was twelve years old I had left the Catholic Church for various reasons. I was, to begin with, an eminently pigheaded and stubborn young lady who insisted on learning the hard way. And from the great depths of my 12-year-old wisdom I came to the conclusion that the

Catholics that I met were not Catholic. But maybe I can be forgiven on that score for it's a common error. Adults make it constantly. If only people could realize that a Church that survives 1900 years, in spite of the human element representing it, has the answer because it *does* survive.



BL·MARTIN
DE·PORRES·

But that is much too subtle for a 12-year-old to see. It's too subtle for most people.

In Friendship House I had found Catholics who were Catholics. I found people who dared to be fools for Christ's sake . . . and who thumbed their noses at a bourgeois standard of living. Here were people to whom the Mystical Body of Christ was a reality . . . and not a cliché employed by "long-haired Theologians." And here was social work being done in a strictly unorthodox fashion . . . its most unorthodox feature being no salary . . . which is soul-shaking, to say the least, to the average, professional social worker. Here were people who based their day on the Mass, who raised a cry for "Interracial Justice," and who knew what the "Brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God," meant.

BUT the success of a conversion, I thought, cannot be measured at Friendship House. There you have the company of kindred souls . . . and the emotional satisfaction of working with the people, and you have the Baroness who is like a shot in the arm when enthusiasm lags. The only yardstick for measuring the success of my spiritual vaccination, I decided, was to go out in the world and live with the people in it. If I compromise with mediocrity in living, all of this hasn't meant much. If I live up to my convictions . . . in the face of ridicule and tough going . . . then this Catholic vaccine has gotten into my system and it's part of me . . .

That was last June and all the philosophizing as to whether or not I could get along without Friendship House props seems remote and unreal. Maybe I've been lucky . . . but all the Sunday Catholics that I've met . . . and all the strange situations that I've been placed in, have only served to make me realize the utter rightness of the things I've learned.

I feel sorry (and I don't mean to sound superior) for people who don't

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HARLEM FRIENDSHIP HOUSE NEWS

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A PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

The zeal of Thy House hath eaten me up

THE harvest is ripe . . . wherever the eye falls the golden wheat of souls stretches out into the distance, ripening, maturing, ready for the harvesters. Already here and there it is over-ripe . . . stalks stand straight, unbowed by the weight of the grain that birds and wind have scattered uselessly. Other patches of the field look brown and sick with rust . . . others again are slowly dying, parched. Over the whole, immense field there is a sense of urgency, over-ripeness, fear. Where are the harvesters?

Over thirteen million Negroes in the U.S.A. still, once in awhile, turn their tired, disillusioned faces toward us who hold in our sinful hands the fullness of God's truth. Yet, already the toll of rust, winds and alien hands is great. Thieves in the night have come and harvested God's acres . . . corroded the souls of Black and Brown men He died to save. It happened because we were not there to reap and thresh. There were too few of us who saw the richness of the harvest, too few who understood the cry of the Black Man for God, the cry of the God-Man for souls.

YOUTH was the next. Youth, that today dies so gallantly in distant lands, yet has not forgotten its blighted childhood spent in dark alleyways of our grim cities, box-cars coming and going through the immensity of America . . . never getting anywhere, yet leaving behind them the intolerable sight of their families broken in body and soul, bereft of the dignity of their humanity. Families standing in line before Welfare Agencies to gather the crumbs that fell from the table of the richest nation in the world, into their hungry hands. Crumbs that barely sufficed to keep them alive . . .

Deep and lasting is the memory of the young. And painful the thin scabs covering the festering wounds in their minds and souls. Silently they go, marching with determined steps to fight, so that never again should children of the world have to go through what they went through. Resolute and grim are their youthful faces. All over the land they talk . . . holding bull sessions in barracks and USO's . . . in parks and taverns. The gist of all their talks — one — FREEDOM FROM WANT. They are now building a new world in their souls. Has God a part in it? God and His Church . . . ? In England the Padre Hour with the Armed Forces has brought to light the fact that 75% of all their questions were SOCIAL. It is SOCIAL JUSTICE THAT THEY

ARE FIGHTING FOR. Are we making it clear to them that it must be a *CHRISTIAN SOCIAL JUSTICE*? None other will work . . . none other will do. They are another field, over-ripe, tense and waiting . . . are we sending plenty of harvesters there?

NIGHT and day assembly lines roar. Cities send their children to work the clock around, forging the instruments and weapons of Victory. War workers all. Huddled in shanty towns, in prefabricated ones, filling, spilling over, packing city after city. Men, women, youth, kids. What of this field? Right here at hand . . . the field of Christ the Worker, Who walks amongst them on quiet feet. What are we Catholics doing for it? Behold the rust of sin and lust stalking them . . . behold their unanswered, quivering question "what of tomorrow?" . . . behold their groping, seeking. Are we, the harvesters of God at hand to bind and heal, answer and give hope. Or is this harvest too to die for want of hands to gather it up?

THE streets are bright with lights and laughter. City streets, village streets, town streets. The shops attractive. The movies enticing. The juke boxes and music bands loud and gay. The parks and village greens spring-like. Yet to him, who has eyes, frightening and dark, for the greedy hand of sin is upon them. Juvenile Delinquency we call it in this year of grace, 1943. Wild is that youth. School kids all. Stealing and fornication their daily pastime. Louder the music . . . more strident the laughter. Faster and faster life in wartime. Whose sins . . . theirs? Those kids not yet in their teens? No, ours . . . the workers in the vineyards of the Lord . . . Catholics, who, each and all heard from Divine Lips the command to "Go and teach all nations." Apostles all . . . their brother's keeper . . . asleep or half-awake . . . we let the harvest of children's souls go by forfeit . . .

And all, and each of these—a *soul*. The preciousness of it. Think of HIS beautiful Body hanging against a dark and shamed sky . . . is it not enough to cry out in an agony of love? The heart of God pierced with a lance . . . TO MAKE A PATH OF LOVE FOR US — TO IT. We, to whom the grace of understanding, seeing, knowing has been given. We should be there in the thick of the fight . . . ready to crawl through all the slime . . . through all the dangers . . . through all the filth of the world . . . to save these souls for HIM WHO DIED FOR THEM . . .

ARE we? Oh! Catholics of America, arise. This is the acceptable day and time . . . behold the harvest waiting. There is so much to do. Let us do it now . . . the Negro, the Workers, Youth, Children. All must be encompassed by our Charity, whose other name is Love. Let us sharpen the sickle of Faith, and oil the threshing machine of Grace. IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE HOLY GHOST, LET US GO . . . WE MUST. LISTEN, DO YOU HEAR HIS VOICE ABOVE THE ROAR OF THE GUNS, ABOVE THE CRY OF THE DYING? LISTEN . . . HEAR HIS CRY "SITIO" — I THIRST FOR SOULS. OH! LET THE ZEAL OF OUR FATHER'S HOUSE CONSUME US . . . FOR, IF IT DOES NOT, THE HARVEST WILL DIE . . . WASTED . . . AND WE WITH IT.

THE BARONESS JOTS IT DOWN

I HAVE been travelling these last months. Far away. Someday I shall tell you, dear friends, where I have been. Privately to myself I call my last trip: "An assignment to hell." Did you know that there are many hells in these U.S.A. of yours . . . the hells of the Harlems of America . . . all of them. In big cities like New York, Chicago . . . and all the others. In rural communities, in towns, villages, where men have segregated their brothers in ghettos of poverty, overcrowdedness and filth . . . because their skins were black.

The hell of other slums . . . Jewish, Polish, Irish. The hell of back-of-the-stockyards in Chicago . . . and other factories and their backyards in other cities. The hell of the Bowery . . . and State Street, where men without friends or money try to find forgetfulness in lust and drink . . . both for the asking and a few begged pennies. I journeyed through all these hells, but I did not find them worse nor deeper than the hell of men's souls all over this country. Men who are clamoring for God and His Truths, and are not given them. Yes, someday I shall take you all on a tour of hells, my friends. Someday, if we still have time to tour. For these hells of mine are peculiar, inasmuch as they might break open at any moment and engulf you and me in their depths . . . because you and I forgot that we too were Apostles of Christ and His Truths.

MARY JERDO married Tom Keating recently. You remember Mary as author of "A Novice in Harlem" and of the feature article in this issue. Well, she and Tom live now at 11 East Pearson Street, Chicago, Ill. and work for Bishop Sheil and his marvelous CYO. They are very happy—these two, and their little, cozy housekeeping room is another Friendship House of sorts. Everyone who passes through Chicago finds his way to 11 E. Pearson, sooner or later. And I will let you in on a secret . . . Mary, who wrote so well about me making soup, could never boil even water. Well, love and Tom did miracles, and Mary is an Al cook. I know . . . I just had a chicken dinner there last Sunday, and was it good . . . oh, boy!

Mary is writing a book on Catholic Action. Its title: "Catholic Action ain't Long-Haired." It is going to be a book just like Mary Jerdo herself. I mean, Mary Keating. (Tom is angry

because I keep calling him and his wife, "the Jerdoes") . . . full of slang, holiness, grace, fun and hard-headed truths . . . plus, last, but not least, of Christ . . . the Christ of today, who walks America. I know it will be a swell book. In the meantime, if you pass through Chicago, don't forget to call on them. You will find warmth and hospitality—ration points or no ration points. So be sure and drop in, or write. Mary will be glad to hear from her old friends. And shhhh . . . we think they are still accepting wedding gifts. Send them good Catholic books, but please don't tell them we told you so . . . let it be a little secret . . . between us.

ANN HARRIGAN of the Friendship House of Chicago looks wan and tired these days. And no wonder. She has worked so hard. Accomplished so much. Her day, indeed, is never done. A Commando of God, she knows not the word, "weariness" in her indomitable soul and spirit. Her day is long yet she never counts the hours. There is about her a great peace—His peace—which, indeed, surpasseth all understanding. As I look at her I see the Lay Apostle in action. To me it is all so simple. A Lay Apostle is one who falls in love with God. Who then arises and goes where the Lord leads. Free. Without earthly possessions, taking neither gold nor silver. Ready to spend herself, himself, without counting the cost. Men of the world work to win a war . . . almost twenty hours of the day. The Lay Apostle of Christ does likewise, in the eternal warfare for souls. Tired? Of course. Who would not be. Exhausted, maybe . . . but always at peace. Never counting the cost. Untrammelled by any restrictions, except God's Commandments, and the leadership of the Hierarchy. Unafraid, simple and wise in God's simplicity. Trained in knowledge of God's word, and self-discipline. A Commando of God . . . ready to strike wherever he or she is sent.

His companions . . . Lady Poverty, at times, Lady Pain . . . and always my Lady Charity. Part of the whole. One of the masses, the Lay Apostle moves in his own world, yet brings Christ into it. A leaven of the Almighty. Humble and unknown. Ready to die for God, and willing to do more—LIVE FOR HIM. Yes, Ann Harrigan looks tired, but there is a strange and glorious light in her eyes. It must be the reflection of Christ's . . .

CHICAGO HOUSE

Ann Harrigan

AT LAST we have had a Day of Recollection! Monsignor Hillenbrand of St. Mary of the Lake Seminary graciously put his time and brilliant abilities at our disposal. The forty men and women, colored and white, who made it, really did "retreat" from the world for the day, and concentrated on the Mystical Body of Christ, the Liturgy, and the Lay Apostolate, under Monsignor's penetrating direction. His words have had the good effect of making our crowd still more hungry to do what he said was the purpose of the lay apostle: "to give Christ to the people."

Which reminds me of what Fr. Hanley calls the best Catholic book of 1942—"This War is the Passion" by Caryl Chessler. To paraphrase a sentence as I can remember it—"Whenever anybody tries to bring Christ to the people, a great howl is set up, as if all the devils in hell objected." Or something like that. And I can tell you that we in Chicago FH are getting a lot of objections, but then a wonderful priest like Fr. Georges (OP) drops in from a respite directing "The Torch," and says he sat down and wrote to one of our more vociferous critics, and that makes you feel good all over. Or take the letters we receive from priests, telling us not to mind these troublemakers. And truly we don't. We pray for them.

Now that the tragedy is passed maybe I will have the heart to tell about Martinico. Who is Martinico? Well, it's a long story. It seems that there is a hole in the kitchen floor. It also seems that through this hole would come a nocturnal party of gray carnivorous little beasties (shhh . . . mice) and we were troubled. So we asked Bl. Martin to do something about it. He did. One night we were all sitting at table and someone let out a minor shriek . . . "O, lookit that paw!" Sure enough, it was the paw of a kitten who somehow had gotten stuck under the floor, sticking through the hole! Bernard, our expert in Arabic and encyclopedic items, averred, after due thought that it was an old cat. For days we fed it through the hole. Dave even pouring down canned milk to still the hungry meows. But he kept on meowing even when he couldn't possibly be hungry. He must be hurt. At about this time, our ice box began to demand some attention, too. After all no cat can claim it all. Over the weekends the icepan would overflow

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EX STAFF REPORTER

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get this kind of real earthy training in our Faith. I don't know where the bottleneck is on the assembly line . . . but somehow the message of the Church, on everything from economics to the sanctification of one's soul doesn't seem to have reached the people . . . or the majority of the people. You can look at it two ways, though. Maybe the people don't want the message. Once you start on the road to Golgotha it means picking up your cross . . . and it means suffering. And Golgotha and the comfortable existence of the Bourgeois Catholic can't be correlated. It's one or the other. Being "a fool for Christ's sake" is not compatible with the complacent Catholic's ideology.

Someday I intend to make a symposium of the questions that I've been asked, and of the happy philosophies within the frame-work of Catholicism that some of our brethren have evolved . . . to escape the demands that being real Catholics make upon us. I have been asked on several occasions about "what kind of habit the Lay Apostolate of Catholic Action wore." But maybe that question is understandable because not all people are aware that the Pope has called us all into the field of Catholic Action, and that we are all members of the Lay Apostolate. Where the fault lies for that lack of knowledge, I cannot say.

The statements that I understand less are those made by people who are known as Catholic intellectuals and who have had the benefit of Catholic training. I have been told that "business ethics and religion don't mix," . . . "that economics is the solution for the masses . . . that and nothing more." Others have told me that they have their own comfortable God, the kindly old man with a beard, who doesn't demand that they make any type of sacrifice at all. And of course the question of Racial Equality is always with us. Countless times I have heard the same old bromides and the same odious statement about "God never wanting the races to mix or associate with each other. It was quite obvious since the Negro was black . . . and we were white." These and similar mental aberrations go on . . . ad infinitum . . . ad nauseam.

THESE are cross-sections of statements that I've heard uttered from the south to the mid-west. But

counter balancing this, I have been deeply impressed by the statements made, not by the spiritual sophisticates who give lip service, but by those who have a "simple and unquestioning faith" which I believe is the greatest gift of all. I have seen people living in the depth of poverty, suffering from hunger and grave illnesses, who carry their crosses with supreme faith. And I have met others, who possibly have never heard of Catholic Action, and yet who work long hours for their fellow-men, and when questioned about being weary have said . . . "You can't think about yourself in times like these. You're really working for Him . . . up there."

To a certain type of Catholic sophisticate this statement has all the earmarks of a pious aphorism. It reeks of sentimentality. But "working" for Him . . . up there, is the meat of the whole Catholic Action ideology broken down into vernacular. If you're not "working" for Him . . . whether you're a stenographer or a social worker or a business executive you're a hundred percent off the beam. If you work for "HIM" you must do it because you love Him . . . and if you love Him . . . then you will radiate your love by seeing Christ in your fellow-men . . . and you will treat them accordingly. What a simple solution for the ills of humanity!

Being an Ex-Staff-worker-at-large is a frightening and challenging business. I am not a reformer. I haven't the equipment to be one . . . but in the light of what I learned at Friendship House, I have a constant and unceasing obligation to those who have been less fortunate than myself. Whatever I know . . . I must transmit to others. And before I transmit it to others . . . I have to live myself . . . lest I pay lip service.

CHICAGO HOUSE

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and that made the floor boards ex-

pand, so that one Monday morning we were greeted by a hill of these swollen boards, the Sierra, it was nicknamed. This was being fixed about this time, and our friend Palmer merely stuck his bare arm a little further under the floor, and pulled out . . . a kitten! The tragedy came when we were trying to housebreak him . . . or was it her? And it was showing too, but he had exhausted our patience beyond the point of endurance . . . so we put him out . . . but only for a short while. So we thought. But nobody thought of him till the next day . . . and we have never seen him since . . . or was it her? But can you tell why we called him Martinico?

WE hope Bl. Martin doesn't think we looked a gift horse(?) in the face, but I don't think he has for he's been mother and father to us since we started. Bl. Martin reminds me of the sign I used to see in a humble shop in our neighborhood . . . "No job too large; no job too small" . . . and that seems true of Martin, the wonder worker of Peru. Mary Alice insists that we have cider (out of season) for our barn dance. So Bl. Martin gets us cider. I say, "Bl. Martin, who will fill in on Monday and Wednesdays at 4 o'clock while I'm at the University?" And, believe it or not, a lady comes along in my absence, and says she will come Mondays and Wednesdays at 4!

At our third Sunday Communion breakfast, John Doebele had prepared a special feast for us in the form of a copy of Pope Pius XII's allocution to the Eucharistic Congress in St. Paul, 1941. Alma Savage was here at that time and was thrilled to death at the swell bunch and their avid interest in building strong foundations in the spiritual order to change the social order. Again, the problem is time, time, time . . . for the volunteers still have their homes, jobs, other clubs, recreation, etc. . . and still they come. And for that, thanks be to God.

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